



**Testimony  
Betsy Gara  
Executive Director  
Connecticut Council of Small Towns  
Before the Planning & Development Committee  
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The Connecticut Council of Small Towns (COST) appreciates the opportunity to provide the following comments relative to **HB-5603, An Act Concerning Regional Technology**.

**Plans of Conservation & Development**

Sections 1 - 3 of the bill requires consideration of “the application and use of technology to enhance efficiencies, foster collaboration, increase transparency and access to information and reduce costs” in local, regional and state-wide plans of conservation and development. Although COST recognizes the importance of using technology to achieve these goals, it is unclear what is specifically required to ensure compliance with this language.

**Nutmeg Network**

COST opposes Section 4 of the bill which discontinues Regional Performance Incentive Program grants to municipalities for the purpose of connecting to the Nutmeg Network.

Many towns are poised to move forward with inter-municipal projects to utilize the Nutmeg Network to share certain back office functions to achieve cost savings and improve the efficiency of such services, including data storage and back-up, GIS mapping, disaster recovery and payroll and accounting. The Nutmeg Network offers one of the most promising opportunities for savings for municipalities.

The discontinuance of this program is particularly troubling given the \$20 million lapse in municipal aid which was included in the budget to reflect efficiencies achieved through implementation of recommendations of the Municipal Opportunities and Regional Efficiencies (MORE) Commission. Unfortunately, the recommendations, to date, have not resulted in any actual cost savings. We are therefore concerned that the discontinuance of this program will erode any potential for savings in this area.

*COST is an advocacy organization committed to giving small towns a strong voice in the legislative process. Its members are Connecticut towns with populations of less than 30,000. COST champions the major policy needs and concerns of Connecticut’s suburban and rural towns.*